

AN
Impartial Account
OF
M^r JOHN MASON
OF
WATER-STRAFORD,
AND HIS
SENTIMENTS.

By H. MAURICE, Rector of
Tyringham, Bucks.

Ἐπιφρονεῖν ὅτι ὁ δὲ φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ
ἐπιφρονεῖν. Ne quis Sapiat supra quam oportet, sed ad
sobrietatem Sapiat. Rom. 12. 3.

Proxima puris
Sors est manibus, nescire nefas. Sen. Herc. Fur.

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TO THE
Most Reverend Father in GOD
JOHN,
Lord Arch-Bishop of YORK.

May it please your Grace,

IN Obedience to your Lordship's Wishes, I here publish an entire Account of Mr. Mason, and his Followers; which by God's Blessing may detect Error, and becalm Faction; In those chiefly, who esteem a general Rendezvous upon Earth, a better enjoyment, than Heaven's Triumph; who look upon all Government as Antichristian, and think it their duty to despise Dominion, that they may set up themselves, and Christ together.

I had design'd, indeed, to silence the Incredulity.

The Epistle Dedicatory.

lity of the Atheist and Deist, but a report being spread, (and believ'd by some great Friends) that I was the Publisher of Mr. Mason's Letters, &c. made me contract my thoughts, that I might gain, and undeceive the more Readers.

I return your Grace my Humble Thanks, for the Honour of your Commands, for the opportunity of doing a probable piece of Service to the Church of God, and for the liberty you have given me, to profess my self,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's constant Servant,

Henry Maurice.

A N
Impartial Account
 O F
 Mr. *JOHN MASON*,
 A N D H I S
SENTIMENTS.

THE Design of *these Papers* is to transmit to Posterity, as remarkable an instance of *pure Enthusiasm* as the Reformed World ever knew.

They are writ in Answer to several Letters.

The *First* of which desir'd a Representation of the Matters of Fact at *Water-Stratford*.

The *Next* desir'd an *Account* of Mr. *Mason's* Character.

The *Third* ask'd my *Thoughts* of the Impulses and Vision to which he pretended, and what might occasion them?

The *Last* was, To enquire how it could be consistent with the Goodness of God to suffer a Person that meant well, to be deluded?

The Fact is this, That for Four Years, or more, Mr. *Mason* had been a stiff Asserter of *our Saviour's Reign a Thousand Years on Earth*, and had drawn a Scheme of it in a Discourse, call'd, *The Mid-night Cry*; which was Preach'd in several Places with great Zeal, and receiv'd with much Applause.

This brought him many Followers Ten Miles about; and as his Hearers encreas'd for the Novelty of the Doctrine, so the Notion was confirm'd, and in time improv'd.

The *Reign upon Earth* was to commence in *England*, and *Water-Stratford* was the very Spot of Ground where *his* Standard was to be set up; Those who would repair thither, might find a safe Retreat, but all other parts of the Nation would *infally* be expos'd to Fire and Sword.

Those who could heartily believe this, thought it their Interest to reside *there*; and those who had it, brought with them as many Necessaries as they thought would last 'till the good Time should come.

As for Lodgings, when his House was fill'd, some (as I was told) lay in the Town, and others

thers made themselves open Partitions in the Barn, fearing no ill, because they design'd none.

About *Easter* last their Notions were fix'd, and their Habitations settl'd.

Here they spent their time, nigh an hundred of them, (besides many hundreds of well-wishers who were coming and going) in Dancing, Singing, Praying, &c. 'till the long expected Appearance presented it self, on *April* the 16th. last, about One in the Morning.

Towards the latter end of *April*, being at *Northampton*, I call'd on Mr. *Ives*, a Relation to Mr. *Mason's* Family, and discoursing on his late Pretences; Mrs. *Ives* show'd me the following Letter, dated *April* the 23d. which I immediately Transcrib'd.

April 23d. Water-Stratford.

Dear Cous. *Ives*.

THE Thing which I am about to relate to you, is very wonderful: I need not rehearse what Doctrines my Brother has of late (four Years) been upon; you know it has been of Christ's setting up of his Kingdom, and that it would be usher'd in by a dreadful Tribulation, and that this was very near at hand. But the great Thing I have to acquaint you with,

+ Sister to Mr Mason's wife

with, is, That on the sixteenth day of this Instant, the Lord Jesus Christ did appear in this House to his Servant my Brother Mason in his glorious Person. He was in a Crimson Garment, his Countenance exceeding Beautiful, abundance of sweetness and great Majesty. He had the sight of him for some considerable time, and then he was pleas'd to disappear. I have not time nor strength to write what I heard from him of Christ's glorious Person: He often says, that all the glories that the World speaks of, are but dirt to what has appear'd in the face of Christ. Thus much I was desirous to acquaint you, and the rest of my Relations with; and now He and the rest, that have had the Faith of Christ's coming, live in the immediate expectation of Christ's Appearance here, to gather to himself all his People, to preserve them from the storm that is coming upon this land. Those I say that God has given this Faith to, are come hither, and sing and dance before the Ark day and night, some at a time, and bid the Michals despise to their peril. Here has been many hundred of Spectators, but my Brother's advice to them all is daily, to go home, and see if they have Oyl, and trim their Lamps, for the Bridegroom is very near coming.

My Brother has had a thousand false stories reported of him; and one, that he was mad; But he never had any thing like it in all his Life. And it is not
doubted

doubted but he will prove the Prophet of the Age, and sent of God, as Noah was, to warn the World, and the Forerunner of Christ's second coming, as the Holy Baptist was of Christ's first coming; and that Elijah in the last of Malachy, that was to be sent before the Great and Dreadful Day.

But I must conclude, That those who have this Faith of Christ's coming are mean, unlearned, and contemptible Persons, in the Eye of the World, excepting this Minister; and that has much stumbled all sorts of People. God gives the Faith to whom he pleases; and at Christ's first coming was given to Fishermen, and unlearned poor Creatures; and so He has done again, that no Flesh may glory in His sight. I have been larger than I thought. I rest

Your Affectionate and Humble

Servant and Kinswoman,

Margaret Holms.

Upon the reading of this, I went on the 28th of April, to visit my old Friend Mr. Mason at Water-Stratford, with whom I had been familiarly acquainted, twenty years before. I no sooner came into his Yard, but was surpriz'd with the wildness of unexpected Noises.

They

They were all finging, some to one tune and some to another, but so loud, that it could not be exact.

When I enter'd the House a more melancholy Scene of a Spiritual *Bedlam* (which still fills me with horror) presented it self; Men, Women and Children running up and down, one while stretching their Arms upwards to catch their Saviour in his coming down, others extending them forwards to meet his embraces, a third with a sudden turn pretends to grasp him, and a fourth clapping their hands for joy they had him, with several other antick Postures, which made me think that *Bedlam* it self was but a faint Image of their *Spiritual Phrenses*. All this while they were finging as loud as their throats would give them leave, till they were quite spent, and look'd black in the Face.

When these were tir'd, in came a fresh Company, repeating the same Hymns, with the like noise and wildness.

At this time Mr. *Mason* was in a darkish Garret upon his Bed, (and dy'd as I take it, within a Month after) and it was with some difficulty that I got access to him; (for they had deny'd several.)

The Sister who wrote the Letter, introduc'd me, but told me beforehand, that *he* did not care to talk

talk of his Sentiments, or Vision ; but referr'd me (as to that Matter) to his *Two Witnesses*, who could say as much to it as himself.

He had a Week before been troubled with a *Γλωσσελγία*, or a *Ranula* under his Tongue, which made him the more unwilling to talk. While I discours'd of common Matters, he heard me patiently, but as soon as I enquir'd of his Vision, he sign'd to his Sister, to have me down to the *Two Witnesses*, who knew all his Mind.

I went from him into a lower Chamber, where two Men, which they call'd the *Witnesses*, (but I suppose one was but a Deputy, because I have since heard, that one of the *Witnesses*, who dy'd within a Week after, was sick when I was there) met me with many Spectators.

The *Witnesses* gave me the same Account with the Letter, That *our Lord* appeared to the *Prophet*, on the 16th of *April*, &c.

And to confirm the Truth of it, they further told me, That, at the same time, two Angels appeared in white, to a Man of their Society, as he was going homewards to *Great-Harwood*, and forc'd him back again.

I ask'd the *Witnesses*, What was their proper Business? They answered, with much assurance, That *their Prophet* was not to bear Witness

of himself; That in the Mouth of two or three Witnesses every Truth should be establish'd; That God would give Power to his two Witnesses, &c. But the choicest Place was (as I remember) *Isa. 44. 5. One shall say I am the Lord's, and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob, and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and sir-name himself by the name of Israel: and so on to the 8th. Verse, Ye are my Witnesses.*

They witnessed, That their Prophet was the very Person spoken of, *Rev. 1. 1. He sent and signified it by his Angel to his servant John.*

They witnessed, That Mr. Mason was *that Elijah*; that *John the Baptist* was not *that Elijah* that was to appear before the great and terrible Day, as the *Baptist* said I am not; therefore there were two *Elijah's*, and therefore *John Mason* was one.

They witnessed farther, That their Prophet saw our Saviour for a considerable time, that *He said many things, but spoke no words.* For His Majestick Looks said, that he came to Judge and Condemn the greatest part of the World; and his smiling Countenance said, He would save *Sion*, and the *holy Ground*; that is, said they, *Water-Stratford and its Borders.*

They could not, or would not tell me, how far the Borders would extend, but they told me that
few,

few, that very few of this Land should be Sav'd.

This I thought very hard, and therefore I ask'd them, What would become of some truly pious Persons, that might never hear of *Water-Stratford*? To which they answered, That some of the *Elect* would be *ball'd* thither, without their consent, by Angels. Will our Saviour (said I) be visible to all when He comes amongst you? They reply'd, To very few: And as they seem'd to explain themselves, only to the Prophet, and his Witnesses; but with the Prophet he would daily converse, and be very Familiar; and His chief Residence would be in the Clouds. They expect Him, they assur'd me, every Minute, and therefore Day and Night they are upon the Watch. When our Saviour has done here, He would (they said) carry the *Believers in this new Prophet*, to the *New Jerusalem*, and gather the *Elect* in other places to them.

When I ask'd 'em, How Mr. *Mason* was affected at the sight of our Saviour? they had an Answer ready, That he had not the least fear upon him; which, they told me, was the fulfilling of a Prophecy, *Heb. 9.* and the last. *He shall appear the second time without sin to salvation.*

And now I thought it time to enquire seriously, Whether it was not possible that their Prophet

might be deceived? To which the Sister (who had been all the while present) gravely Answer'd, with an obliging Accent; O Sir, *the Holiness of his Life makes it impossible, that God should permit him to be deceived.*

When I had given (as I thought) a due reply to this, *the Witnesses* confess'd, they did not much insist upon *that*, since the *Spirit* assur'd both the Prophet and themselves, That *He* was the very *Christ* that appear'd to him.

To this I return'd, That several have been as confident of the *Spirit's impulse* as themselves, and yet have been deceiv'd; and then they cited something out of Dr. Owen, That though he that has not the Spirit may think he has it, and be deceiv'd; yet they that have it know they have it, and cannot be deceived. Like those that are in a Dream, may think themselves awake; but they that are awake are well assur'd of it. After this I ask'd, what Argument *they* had to convince the doubtful, who thought it a little unreasonable to believe such *strange matters* at second hand? What Miracles, what Signs, &c. But they interrupted me, and in a half-passion answer'd, This was *sign* sufficient, that all should be Sav'd that believ'd it, and they that did not, should be *destroy'd and damn'd.*

This began to stir me, and I could not forbear saying, *That I fear'd they were all deluded, and that they would find in a little time, &c.* But the Witnesses would not suffer me to proceed, and, starting up in a furious transport, told me, I would be (I have forgot the Word, but am sure it meant) damn'd for my Unbelief, and so they avoided me.

When I came down into their Parlour, the Dancers were increas'd in that Room to *Thirty*, or more.

They usually entertain'd all sorts of Vagabond-Fidlers, Singing-Boys or Wenches, and hir'd them to stay with them; because they thought our Saviour would have all sorts of Musick to attend Him.

They pretended not to any Miracles, nor discerning of Spirits; nor need they, for they require nothing but this Faith, (*That Christ has this Second time appear'd*) in Order to Salvation.

If I had talk'd with the Prophet himself of these things, I could have had no better satisfaction; for the only Argument he made use of at that time, to any one that doubted, was --- *By the Eternal God I saw Him with these Eyes.* --- *By the Living God 'tis true, &c.* As he told many that went to see him, and as he said several times in his last Sermon out of the Window (the *Sunday* before I was with him) to above five hundred (some say fifteen hundred) People. He

He had for a long time left off giving the Sacrament to any, but some Select Persons of his own way ; and since the 16th. of April gave it no more, because Christ was come. He had left off Praying, because he thought nothing remained to be prayed for ; and had determined to Preach no more, because they should be all enlightned from above.

If any Man came to him, that had formerly admir'd his Preaching or Praying, he would ask him, if he could believe that *he* saw Christ ? If it was answer'd, that he dar'd not say that, but yet out of respect to him, was afraid to disbelieve, then he would thank God, that He had given him *such a measure* of Faith ; and asking him if he could love Christ, charg'd him to *get Oil*. One of his most considerable Friends (whom he much valu'd) was to see him, a Week or ten Days before my going ; and put the Case home to him, telling him, He should have a great care of what he said, for the sake of his many Friends, as well as upon his own account. For there were many had so great a respect for him, as to be ready to give credit to whatsoever he should vent ; which, in all probability, would have this ill consequence, That if *he* should, after all his confidence, prove mistaken, they would never believe any other *Prophet before him,*

him, for his sake. To all which Mr. *Mason* most solemnly reply'd; *'Tis as true as any thing in sacred Writ.*

About a Week after I had been there, another Gentleman, of his and my Acquaintance, made him a Visit, and told him, He ought to be very cautious in talking of things thus much out of the way. But he answer'd positively, *As sure as God is true I saw him*; and added, He first saw his back Parts, and then his Face, which was too glorious for Words to express. *This Friend* then enquir'd, Whether our Saviour had said any thing to him? And, receiving no answer, he ask'd a Clergy-man that stood by, Whether he understood that our Saviour had said any thing? This anger'd Mr. *Mason* so much, that he passionately turn'd to him; What need was there of saying any thing, when He has actually began His Reign?

A third Friend of his and mine went to him, within a day or two after, when he not only asserted the same things, but shew'd the very place where he stood, described the Foldings of the Gown, with the Colour of it, and declar'd the several *impressions* that the Spirit made upon him at the same time; one was, *That the crimson Gown was dipt in the Blood of his Enemies.* This Person
had

had a great Reverence for Mr. *Mason*, and therefore was not free to tell me the other *Impulses*.

I am well assur'd of the integrity of these *three* Persons, who were his intimate Friends, or else they had found no admittance.

I can't omit another remarkable Instance of their Extravagancy, which I receiv'd from a sober Gentleman. A Servant belonging to his Family, was standing at Mr. *Mason's* Fire-side, when *he* came towards the *Chimney* with a great Roll, and (whether he burnt it or not I am uncertain) down he threw it, crying out with a loud Voice, *Fire, Fire, Fire*. This gave the Alarm to all the rest, who ran up and down with their *fiery* Exclamations for a long time after.

This Passage I had omitted (because it came from a second hand) had not the Sister (whom I visited with several Queries at *Water-Stratford*, on the *twenty third* of *July* last) in a great measure confirm'd it. For she acknowledg'd, That in a *mystical way* there had been *often* crying out *Fire*, to denote, (as I think she said) the suddenness of the Destruction that was coming upon the Land.

I ask'd her at the same time, Whether they had not often talk'd of *Sacrificing*, (for I had heard of several Stories of that nature, and some of them
that

that seem'd *black*) but this was all that she did acknowledge, That there had been frequent mention of Sacrificing among them, not in a carnal, but in a spiritual Sense; that as formerly there was Sacrificing of Prefiguration and Expectation, so now they did eat the Sacrifice of (somewhat that signifi'd) *Thanksgiving*.

In truth, her Answers were by this time become so mysterious and refin'd (like *Molino's* Discourses in his *Spiritual Guide*) that she made me think of the Converse I once had with a melancholy *Rosicrucian Doctor*, whom I desir'd, when he talk'd something obscurely, to explain himself; but then he was ten times more mysterious, and told me, What he said was not to be understood without an *Angelick Understanding*.

The great thing I desir'd to know of her was, Whether Mr. *Mason* (who had been dead some Weeks before) had any Sense of his Death approaching, and whether he had maintained the same Opinions to the last? I was the more inquisitive, because I had receiv'd different Representations about it. She answer'd, That she verily believ'd he had a fore-sight of his death, because he had often said *in this sickness*, *That he had fulfill'd his Ministry, and finish'd his Gospel*. Whereas at the end of a former sickness, about three quar-

ters of a Year before, he said, He knew, or believ'd, he should not die, because he had not fulfill'd his Ministry, nor finish'd the work of the Lord. And I know, a little before he dy'd, he told his *Northamptonshire*-Friends, That they should not be surpriz'd if they heard he was dead.

But though he might think himself mortal three or four days before he dy'd, yet, I am well assur'd, that five or six Weeks before, he had thought otherwise; for about that time, *he* told his most particular Friend, That our Saviour would daily converse with him; and that, 'till he went to the *New Jerusalem*. Which made him ask *him*, whether he thought he should live always, (or words to that effect) and he presently answer'd, *There is here that shall never taste of death*. The Sister added, That in his former Sickness, toward the latter end of it, he declar'd, That he should not dye at that time; because several Prophecies were not verify'd. The most material was, *Isa. 33. 17. Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty, they shall behold the Land that is very far off, thine heart shall meditate terror.*

As to several other Queries I propounded, she answer'd so obscurely, though nevertheless discreetly, that I was inclin'd to write her a Letter about a Fortnight after; which obtain'd this Answer *verbatim*.

Aug.

Aug. 16th. 1694.

SIR,

I Receiv'd your Letter, but must beg your Pardon in not sending the Papers of my Brother; for I cannot be free to lend them out, for many reasons, and have deny'd to do it to a Minister that was his intimate Acquaintance : and what of them has been seen formerly, has since his Death been improv'd against him : and so has all that ever was taken out by *piece-meals*, and has turn'd to no account but *pecking-work against the Doctrine of the Kingdom*. If any Person would spread the Doctrine in course, as it was deliver'd in the four Years Ministry, then all would see, how He clear'd and prov'd all things by Scripture, which he Preach'd. But the Papers that he kept by him, were but part of the Doctrine, and the *Midnight-Cry* contains the three parts, which he often Preach'd upon ; That Christ would have a *Davidical Kingdom* here, and that it would be usher'd in by a dreadful Tribulation, and that this would be done in a short time. He also often declar'd, That he knew himself to be the Harbinger sent before Christ's Face, which several Scriptures point out, that should prepare the way of the Lord, (though he often would say, that he knew himself to be the Unworthiest

“of all the Lord’s Ministers, but God should have
“all the glory of his grace to him, for ever.) He
“declar’d that *by him* the way of the Lord was
“prepar’d, and all things restor’d in a *ministerial*
“way, *by a declar’d Decree* ; and that God had gi-
“ven him *special grace* for this Work, and had *un-*
“*seal’d* the Book to him ; that was to be *seal’d* till
“the time of the end, and had given him the *Reve-*
“*lation of Jesus Christ*, and the testimony of Jesus,
“which is the Spirit of Prophecy. He also de-
“clar’d to us about three Weeks before he sicken’d,
“That now he had fully and wholly done the
“Work, the Lord had sent him upon, as to the Mes-
“sage before Christ’s Face, and that he had but
“very few words more to say to us, for he should
“soon be parted from us, and be with Christ. He
“told us also, That Christ had took the matter in-
“to his own hands, and that he would visibly per-
“form what he had sent him to declare ; He said
“that God had done the part of a God to this Na-
“tion, in giving them warning, and they should
“know that they were the *truths of the eternal God*,
“that were deliver’d amongst them, and the
“words of truth and sobriety ; though the Nation
“had hiss’d at all, and the Devil had roar’d against
“it, yet God would vindicate this Cause, and
“that soon too. Two days after he sicken’d, He
“began

“began to tell us, how God had pour’d in his
 “Loving kindness into his Soul, *in an extraordinary*
 “*manner* ; and so it continu’d all his Sickness. And
 “the last words he spake to us were, that he was
 “*full of the loving-kindness of the Lord*. During his
 “sickness he spoke but little, but what he did,
 “was constantly confirming what he had formerly
 “deliver’d. And to the last he still testify’d, *That*
 “*he had seen the Lord*, and that it was time for this
 “Nation to tremble, and for Christians to trim
 “*their Lamps*.

“And as to our present expectations (as you
 “desire to know) *We believe* there will be a
 “change, according to the word we have had de-
 “livered amongst us, and that Christ did really ap-
 “pear to my Brother, and we take it as a Seal to the
 “*doctrine of the Kingdom*, and as *an appearance for*
 “*his appearance*.

“We do believe also, that the Lord will ap-
 “pear where the word of the *Kingdom* has been.
 “Preach’d, where the Seed of the Kingdom has
 “been sown, which my Brother and others have
 “believ’d is meant this Seed of the Kingdom, which
 “is that Mustard-Tree in which the Birds will
 “come and lodge in the Branches thereof, as
 “*Mat. 13. 32*. And *its believed* that the people
 “of God will be gather’d there, for *where the body*
 “*is,*

“*is, thither will the Eagles be gather’d together.* And
“that he will appear in *that Mountain* where he
“has been waited for, as in *Isaiah* the 25. 9, 10.
“And we do believe him a Prophet sent to this
“Nation.

“Now as to the second Request in your Letter,
“I find my self very willing to serve you, but not
“capable; For the Doctrine that my Brother deli-
“ver’d was very large and weighty, and so are the
“particulars of his Life; and I not being able to
“write Sense or English, conclude, that you will be
“much troubled to read what I have writ already.
“And if I say any thing of that honourable Mini-
“ster, I must say as hundreds more do that knew
“him; That for soundness of Doctrine, for Chri-
“stian Converse, and for Exemplary Conversation,
“he has not left his Fellow in the World. He
“had such a continual Tide to spirituality, such a Zeal
“to the glory of God, and such a Flame of love to Jesus
“Christ, that I never saw the like upon no Man
“upon Earth before. There was certainly an ex-
“traordinary effusion of the Spirit of God pour’d
“out upon him, and he was the self-abasingest Crea-
“ture that ever I knew in my life. He would
“stoop to the necessities of the meanest, but would
“not yield to the sinful humour of the greatest.
“He would never speak evil of no Man, but
“would

“ would say to us, though you condemn practices,
“ condemn not particular Persons ; for said he, a
“ Man that is truly humble , will never open his
“ Mouth in Self-boasting, or Censure of others.
“ He was, like *Moses*, meek in his own Cause ; dead
“ to Affronts, and deaf to Reproaches, and blind to
“ Injuries, but a vehement Man in God’s Cause.
“ And to the *Cartload* of Reproaches that was of late
“ cast upon him, I never heard him answer any
“ thing to them, but *Blessed be God that he has ac-*
“ *counted me worthy to suffer in this honourable Cause.*
“ He work’d in God’s Service, as if he was to me-
“ rit Salvation by it ; but yet call’d himself an *un-*
“ *profitable Servant.* He was of an *easy na-*
“ *ture* in point of Civility , but of a *steely nature*
“ in point of Sinfulness. He was the fiercest Man
“ in the World against Sin, but the pittyfullest
“ Man to the Sinner.

“ His Charity was extraordinary to poor Chri-
“ stians, but perform’d with the greatest Secrecy
“ that possibly could be ; and he never turn’d one
“ Petitioner from his Door without an Alms, and
“ most commonly gave them Soul-instruction also.
“ Now as to his every day Exercise in his Family,
“ I need not acquaint you, for all knew how he
“ walk’d, and how strict he kept the Sabbath. But
“ to note particulars that were remarkable of his
“ Life,

“Life, would swell to a large piece ; and I hear,
 “that Mr. *Hammet*, and Mr. *Mebew*, have been
 “writing his Life and Doctrine, who have been
 “well acquainted with his Conversation these ma-
 “ny Years, and have known what a faithful Mini-
 “ster of Jesus Christ he was, and what extraordi-
 “nary success, from first to last, God gave him in
 “*Conversion work* in his Ministry, and what an uni-
 “versal respect he had for all Christians; and where
 “he saw most of the Image of God, those he loved
 “best, though they differ’d from him in Opinion.
 “The *Haverſham* Christians are able to give a large
 “account of his Life from first to last, ever since he
 “enter’d into the Ministry ; and that *honourable*
 “*Family* also can give you an account of a good
 “part of his Life, therefore I shall say no more
 “From, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

M. Holms.

This is a faithful representation of the matter of fact, in answer to my *first Letter*.

The *second* obliges me to express Mr. *Mason*’s Character, which is but necessary, since the Reports concerning him are very different ; some make him no less than an Apostle, and others
 speak

ſpeak him a moſt horrid Impoſtor; many have thought him divinely inſpir'd, and not a few judg'd him to be diabolically poſſeſt.

On my firſt Enquiries, the accounts were indeed ſo various, that I could liken them to nothing better, than to ſome Pictures I have ſeen of a Saint, or a Devil, according to the different light to which they were expoſ'd.

But theſe different Representations have enabl'd me to make a better diſcovery, by engaging me to trace every ſtory to its firſt original; and to examine (more narrowly) the credit of the firſt Informer. And therefore I promiſe (for I am ſure I can make it good) to deſcribe him in his proper Colours, and to ſet him in a true light; and if it ſhould happen (as I foreſee it will) that ſome ſtrokes be wanting for a perfect Piece, it is *upon my integrity* to make it the more exactly agreeable to the Original.

When he was at School at *Strixton* in *Northamptonſhire*, his earneſt Spirit that was then diſcoverable, made his Maſter often ſay, That if he liv'd, he was like to be a violent Zealot. When he remov'd to *Clare-Hall*, he had the repute of good Parts, but I have been well inform'd, by a Letter from a Clergyman in *Northamptonſhire* (Mr. Gray, who was his Chamber-Fellow at *Cambridge*) dated

Sept. 22. that he was but careless in some part of his Life there, that he would be sometimes starting of Questions, in reference to the usages of the Church of *England* (which seem'd to discover some dissatisfaction) and with greater earnestness, than points discours'd only for dispute sake are ordinarily manag'd. His removal from *Cambridge* was first to *Isbam* in *Northamptonshire*, where he liv'd with Mr. *Sawyer*. I have been told by his Friends, that he studied there most part of the Nights, and when 'twas said it would do him hurt, he answer'd, That he had lost his time at the University, and must regain it. His frequent saying in his Pulpit (according to his familiar way of Preaching) *here stands one that has been as great a Sinner as any of you till it pleased God to open his Eyes*, seems to confirm the account of his Chamber-Fellow, concerning his behaviour in the College; for from that time he was most certainly a Man of severe Morals.

Mr. *Sawyer* (at present of *Kettering*) gave me this account of him, in a Letter dated *Octob.* the first. That whilst he liv'd with him, he was industrious in his studies toward the supply of Academical Learning, and needed rather a Bridle than a Spur, that his Sobriety and Piety was very exemplary, that his endeavours were earnest, both in Family and Parish, to do those things that were honest,

honest, just, &c. and that with a most chearful Spirit, freed from moroseness, or Enthusiasm.

In *Buckinghamshire* he lived several Years, very near me; and the Families, in which we liv'd, being nearly related, I had frequent and intimate Discourses with him.

In his Principles, he was a rigid *Calvinist*, and not a little inclining to *Antinomianism*. 'Tis almost twenty Years since, that we discoursed eagerly about *St. Peter* and *Judas*; and he would acknowledge no other difference betwixt them, but what decrees and irresistible Grace had made. At another time we were no less earnest upon *Imputation*, &c. and for a Conclusion to our Discourse upon that subject, he deliberately asserted, and repeated it, That it was all one whether he had kept the Commandments, or broke them all, since Christ had observ'd them.

His Preaching did commonly border upon the Predestinarian Points, and did often make his Hearers Melancholy, and now and then in danger of Despair. Very long, and very earnest he always was in the Pulpit, so earnest, as not to leave a dry thread about him, as his nearest Friends asfur'd me, and so long, as to be always ready to faint before he gave over.

This, with his good Life, and novelty of his
D 2 Doctrine,

Doctrine, procur'd him many Followers.

After his two Sermons he commonly repeated in the Evening, to a great number that throng'd to hear him, and there were few days in which there were not some with him to propound their doubts. But how he could resolve them from *his* Principles, he never would tell me.

As for his Morals, I must needs say, he had such a (*naturæ bonitas*) complexional goodness, as secur'd him from the bad effects of ill Principles. He was a Person of as great Devotion as ever I met with, and his main aim was to make all he convers'd with to be religious. I think verily he was not only temperate but mortify'd, not only true and just, but kind and charitable. Charitable to the good Name, as well as to the Soul and Body. He was *nec iracundus nec irritabilis*, very affable in his Carriage, Meek in his Converse, and never over-earnest, unless (where he thought he could not exceed) for God.

The Family where he liv'd for many Years, and which he since often visited, very lately told me, They thought him as free from Vanity, as others could be from Vice; and that they could never see wherein he did too much, or where too little. I cannot indeed say so much, yet am ready to think, that all his Redundancies as well as Defects, were design'd in order to a greater good. His

His Prayers were always vehement, and an awful silence, betwixt every Petition, doubl'd their length, with a sort of divine breathings. He affected a laborious way of Address, or else 'tis impossible to imagine but that the frequent habit (tho' he had receiv'd no extraordinary assistance) must have given him a greater facility to express himself. He did never (that I could hear of) speak directly against the Prayers of the Church; but as he made use of some of them in publick, so (when his head would not suffer him to pray in his Family) if he could not perswade any with him, to *extemporize*, he would then desire them to read some *Collects* of the Common-Prayer, which he said were very good. He was once discoursing with a very sober Person of the difference betwixt a Form of Prayers, and no Form, when he thus express'd himself. *Both are very liable to be abus'd. No Form* was apt to make Men Vain-glorious, but a Form was apt to make them careless.

His parts were once above the common level, but the ill conceptions that he entertain'd (and indulg'd) of the Almighty, and his dealings, did certainly so besot him, that he was not capable of a free thought, or a rais'd contemplation. Much musing and heavy thinking made him always liable to the contagion of the body's steam.

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He was seldom free from violent pains in his Head, and troubled with *vapours* in an excessive manner. His Legs and Feet were often so very cold, that two or three hours rubbing could scarce procure any sensible heat. Tho' he lay in his Stockins and wore Boots, yet he was almost constantly benum'd in those parts.

His Head was often so much out of order, that he could not bear the least noise, and when he heard his Sons read, it was by way of whisper. He was forced sometimes to quit his own House, and to live in an unfrequented part of a large House, near me, where he scarce ventur'd to walk for fear of the noise of his own tread, nor could he pray in the Family (tho' it was his chief delight) at those times, lest he should disturb his brain with the sound of his own words.

He much affected the conversation of melancholy Persons, and had particularly contracted a most intimate acquaintance with one Mr. *Wrexham*, that was come to *Haversham*, (Mr. *Mason's* beloved place.)

A melancholy Divine indeed *he* was, and very often *disturb'd*. *He* had bestow'd much time and pains in compiling a more exact and compleat Scripture Chronology (as he thought) than is yet extant. When he had perfected the Work, he
offer'd

offer'd it to the then Bishop of *Lincoln*, to be perus'd, and as he hop'd, approv'd. But it fell out otherwise, and the reproof he there met with, for wasting so much time and pains in a fruitless study, was so much laid to heart, as to hasten his distraction, which happen'd not long after. This Mr. *Wrexham* (who was sometimes with Mr. *Mason*, for a quarter of a year together) was, as he himself own'd, the very Man that put him first upon *Revelation Thoughts*.

His death fill'd Mr. *Mason* with excessive grief, and the loss of his own most prudent Wife, before he had well digested it, made it so overflow, that he never rightly enjoy'd himself after it.

For his last four years (which I look upon as his *Apparatus* to his *Millennium*) he thought himself often acted by a *Divine impulse*, and tho' he would sometimes write down the Sermons for the following Lord's Day (as he had formerly done) upon some other theme; yet he had no sooner ended his Prayer, but he would tell his People, that the Spirit mov'd him to discourse of the *mystery of the Kingdom*, and of nothing else.

Thus he went on till last *April*, when he did *φαινομενοισιν* (as the word is us'd *Ecclus.* 4. 30.) think all his Imaginations to be certainties; and from that time he contracted (as he thought) such

such a Friendship with God, as might warrant him to despise Men. For from that very time his *good nature* left him, he became froward in his Converse, reserv'd in Discourse, and impatient of a Contradiction; yea, and seem'd to damn all Mankind but a few in his own way; and thus he continu'd to his last Minutes.

There are, I know, some serious and good Men, that will be ready to object (from common Report) against one part of the Character relating to his Morals: And there are, I acknowledge, several Stories banded up and down that look reflectingly that way: But on my word I have examin'd them all, and find many of them to be mere invention, and others to be but empty cavils.

There are but Two, that I can hear of, that are any ways considerable, and those I shall duly consider.

The former is a common Report that he did all this to get Money (τὸ μακάριον ὃς πρὶ φιλαργυρίᾳ ἦν, *Soph. Antig.*) for your *new light Men* are generally covetous.

For an instance of this they tell a solemn Story of a Woman that came to abide amongst them, and Mr. *Mason*, they say, sent her back again for Money, that she return'd home, broke open her Husband's Trunk, brought the Money, and was
well

well receiv'd. This Story I have examin'd, and thus much by their own confession is in it, and I am apt to think no more, *viz.* That about a Year since, a Woman that was his admirer, being told of a Desolation coming upon the Land, and believing there was no place of Security but at *Stratford*, did break open a Drawer of her Husbands, where the Money was that she had earn'd in Nursing, and laid it up in Mr. *Mason's* House. But I was assur'd by the Sister (who I think would not deceive me) that Mr. *Mason* knew nothing of it; for of late he had not concern'd himself in Money Matters, any otherwise than to keep a little in his Pocket to give the Poor.

In Truth, I think he was always as far from Covetousness as any Man living; and the little Provision he made for his Children, (notwithstanding his Frugality, and his Teaching School sometimes,) is, I think, a demonstration. He could not design Riches in gathering People to him, because there were several Poor among them, that had little other Subsistence besides *their* Charity: And I am well inform'd, That several who had contracted Debts before they came thither, were there Arrested, and had their Debts paid amongst them. And I was particularly told by one of *Nor-thampton*, That a Relation of his, who had scarce

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Bread

Bread to eat in the dear time, went thither purely for Subsistence, and pretending only (when a perfect Stranger to them) to be of their Party, far'd well for a Week, and then return'd home.

There is another Objection, that has been often urg'd against his Sincerity, of this nature, *viz.* That whereas he has at least pretended to a *Divine Impulse* for these last four Years, *which* oblig'd him to Discourse of the *New Kingdom*, yet whenever it happen'd that he preach'd any where out of his usual Circuit, he would handle other Subjects, and talk like other Men.

But to this I answer, That he did not pretend to be wholly acted by the Spirit in every Discourse; and he often said, *That the Mysteries of the Kingdom were not to be reveal'd to the unprepared, lest it should expose the Mysteries to ridicule, and the Persons to a greater Judgment.* Milk for Babes.

There are, I grant, some other Objections to be made against him, but they do not so immediately reflect upon his Morals, as to prove he had any corrupt design. And though I deny him to be a Counterfeit, I grant him to be culpable. But this I think may be sufficient for the present, in answer to my *Second Letter*.

The Third desires my Judgment of the nature of the Impulses and Vision to which he pretended, and what might be the occasions of 'em?

I Answer,

1. As to the Impulses and Vision I am thoroughly satisfied 'twas mere Delusion, upon these Accounts.

1. Because he has been formerly liable to Mistakes of this kind, for which take this Instance.

Ten or Twelve Years since Mr. *Oliver Pashler*, a sober Divine, of *Buckingham*, within Two Miles of *Water-Stratford*, walk'd with his Wife to give him a neighbourly Visit; they had no sooner enter'd the House, but Mr. *Mason* told Mrs. *Pashler*, she was very kind to let him see her *twice* in one Day. She was at first a little surpriz'd, and made answer, she had not seen him before for a long time. Then he grew positive, and said, *You know very well that you walk'd by my Horse side for several Furlongs together, this very Morning, as I came from Haversham, and we discours'd so and so, &c.* This put her into a great fright, and made her beg of her Husband to go home immediately, for her Ghost was seen, and she should not live.

Mrs. *Mason* (a truly good Wife) seeing her in a great concern, desir'd her, for God's sake, not to be frightned, nor to take any notice of what her

Husband said, *for it was nothing else but one of Mr. Mason's melancholy Fancies, and he was often subject to 'em.*

This Relation Mr. *Pasbler* has formerly mentioned to me, and several others; and two Months since he told me the particulars.

The case is here so plain, that I need only observe that his coming directly from a Melancholy sort of People, and his eager Discourfing and Praying with them, had over-heat his Brain, rais'd the Fumes, and stirr'd the Vapours in an extraordinary manner. He that in his early Years could be thus mistaken at mid-day, might more easily be now deluded at mid-night.

2. I am well assur'd that *the Impulses*, which he, and his Witneffes so much talk'd of, were not Divine, from the wretched Interpretation that they gave of Scripture, which we are fure was dictated by a Divine Spirit.

I could produce many Instances, but those mention'd in the Discourse I had with them are too plain to need more.

What could be more ridiculous than his and their Explication of *Heb. 9. ult.* *He shall appear without sin.* That is, say they, *Mr. Mason shall have no sense of his sins.*

In the Year 1669. he Preach'd and Printed a Funeral Sermon on this Text, and then he could give a rational ſenſe of the words, which he thus explain'd. Chriſt's firſt appearance was very mean, He appear'd as the Son of Man, or rather as a Worm, a reproach of Men, all that ſaw him laugh'd him to ſcorn, but hereafter he ſhall appear as the God of Glory, and the Judge of the quick and dead. In the days of his fleſh he appear'd as a Priſoner at *Pilat's Bar*, and as a Malefactor on the Croſs. Then indeed he ſtood charg'd with the ſins of his People, but *in the day of Judgment* he ſhall appear without ſin unto their Salvation. *Sed quantum mutatus !* He that fooliſhly interprets the Spirit's dictates (I am certain) has not the Spirit.

3. 'Tis evident, that neither the *impulſes* nor *appearance* was divine, from the ill influence that they had upon the perſons affected.

He who before could diſcourſe calmly, and ſeem'd, for his Meekneſs, to be a ſecond *Mofes*, does now, under pretence of divine inſpiration, diſclaim the uſe of reaſon, and imperiouſly dictates his own wilful imagination to the World for certain and undisputable Revelation.

It has been well urg'd againſt the truth of ſome Men's Religion, that it makes the Man worſe that heartily eſpouſes it. And can it be thought, that
that

that persuasion descended from above which marr'd (as I have thought) one of the best tempers in the World;

What he was before I have already said, (nothing but obligation) but of late he was so chang'd as to damn the greatest part of the Nation, and to enclose God's love within the petty confines of his own Sect. He was impatient of a contradiction, he would not hear an Argument, and what was worse, he told (I am sure) his choicest Friends, *That the Books were seal'd and there was no place for repentance.*

This I think is enough in answer to the former part of my *Third Letter*, which desir'd my sense of the Impulses and Vision; I proceed in the next place to give my Sentiments of the occasions.

1. He that has read the short character I have given of him, will find such a Chain of Causes, and concurrence of occasions, that he must needs confess, that nothing less than a constant guard over himself, could, without a miracle, have secur'd him from this, or the like *infatuation*.

We see from the very beginning of his life, that he labour'd under the burthen of his own *Idiosyncrasy*, or peculiar temperament. *This* I know he mistook for an advantage, which made his condition the more dangerous. *This* again was more
opera-

operative from the stinging impressions that a sense of his early miscarriages had left upon his Mind. His grief was further heighten'd from the dismal *Idea* he had form'd of God, as if he had made Mankind on purpose to damn the major part; and his frequent Converse with Men of the same kidney, fix'd his Error, and made him obnoxious to the contagion of *ecstatick Fits*. Vid. *Baron. & Ful. Miscel. Messaliani*.

There may be, I grant, some valuable Persons who are lightly touch'd with the apprehension of Absolute Reprobation, &c. and may (as they think) make it serve to some serious purposes; but he that ruminates upon it, and converts it in *Sanguinem & succum*, as our Friend did, must either Despond or Prophecy. See Dr. *Jackson*, Chap. 51. of the 3^d. Tome, *Tit. Inordinate Liberty*, &c.

The Converse I have had with several Despairing Creatures upon this very account, makes me to insist the more upon it: For I cannot see any rational Comfort that can be administred to any that believe this Doctrine, because they naturally interpret every Providence against themselves. One concluded he should be damn'd because he met with no *Afflictions* here; and others, who have had great *Afflictions*, look'd upon 'em as earnestts of the Damnation to which they were predestinated.

ted. There was one indeed, who had thought her Reprobation was determin'd, became *rescu'd* by a signal Providence.

As she was tempted to make away with her self, she saw her Child fall into the River, and sav'd it. I went to see her the same Morning, thinking it might serve for a good handle to *rescue* her. I told her, when I found her excessive melancholy, That she had as much reason as any body to believe she was *elected*, because God had made use of her to save the Child. And this consideration (while the thing was fresh) took so with her, that presently she became satisfy'd, and is now perfectly well, capable of sound Doctrine and good Advice.

To proceed,

His excessive *Vapours* were a no less natural cause of his windy Conceptions: He was so far sensible of his being that way infested, that he complain'd much of 'em to his Friend Mr. *Ives*, when he gave him a Visit ten or twelve days before he dy'd. But to convince him that *they* had no influence upon his Judgment, he explain'd his Doctrine to him, and so betray'd himself. I am sure (said he) that *Christ* is now entering upon his Reign here, as really and truly as ever King *Charles*, King *James*, or King *William* Reign'd;
but

but mistake me not, for I do not mean that he will sit in the Parliament-House, &c. This made Mr. Ives advise him to let Blood speedily, not so much out of hopes of working a Cure (for he found he was too far gone for that) as to prevent his growing worse.

These Vapours having made him incapable of a sober use of his Faculties, he became dispos'd for a new Light, or for any thing that was out of the way. He believed, and often discours'd it, That Divine Inspiration was no strange thing, and he instanc'd commonly in Arch-Bishop *Usher*, as a Man divinely inspired, and was under dismal apprehensions of a Prophecy that was much talk'd of, under his Name.

But these were but the beginnings of Distraction: His Friend, Mr. *Wrexham*, had taught him to be mad by Book; (let it not seem light, for I cannot forbear saying it, because I know it to be true,) and the loss of his good Wife made him continually descant upon the *New-found-Ground*, 'till he became compleat Master of the Crotchets.

His chiefest Friends have very lately assur'd me, That the *Millenary-Notion* was wholly owing to Mr. *Wrexham*; and that he never truly indulg'd Melancholy (though he was often liable to it) 'till

his Wife (a Woman of more than ordinary discretion, as well as Piety) departed this Life. I must add, That I well know that Mr. *Mason* did not only receive the *Notion* of the *Millennium* from Mr. *Wrexham*, but the very Year when it would commence; (he was by the way confident of the Year, though he would determine nothing of the Day:) to prove this I have not only the Testimony of his chief Friends, but Mr. *Wrexham's Chronological Talent* to refer to.

Alfred (I well remember'd) in his *Chronology*, had fix'd it for this Year 1694. And while I was upon the Enquiry, Whether Mr. *Wrexham* had been conversant in this *Millenarian Author*, (though I had reason to suppose it, because my Learned Friend, that gave me his Character, had told me scarce any *Chronology-Writer* had escap'd him) my *Bookseller* at *Northampton* sends me the very Book that was Mr. *Wrexham's*, and his Name in the first Page, with several Notes and References under his own Hand-writing. 'Tis needless, I think, to cite much out of him, for there is scarce a Page where he explains the Visions and Prophecies, but we find frequent mention of the Year 1694. (See p. 146. p. 148. and 484. *Ab hoc currente Anno 1623. usq; ad 1694. erit protasis sive preparatio ad mille annos Apocalypticos, quibus elapsis incipiet bellum*

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Gog & Magog, & hoc excipiet illustris ille adventus Domini ad judicium.)

I will add farther, (though here I am not certain) That I verily think from what I have heard and consider'd, that I can assign the cause of the believ'd appearance on that very Day it happen'd, or rather the Night preceding, the 16th. of April last.

As I urge not this for Matter of certainty, so I would not be thought to reflect upon Mr. Mason in it as a designing Cheat; but I do it to give a probable Account at least, How he that was capable of any false impression, became deluded at that particular time, viz. on Sunday-Night, or Monday-Morning.

His coldness to the *Church Prayers* I have already hinted, and have in part said, that I meant by it, an indifferency rather than an aversion.

For he constantly observ'd, as far as I can learn, the great Days of the *Nativity*, *Resurrection*, &c. and always was well pleas'd to read the *Epistles* and *Gospels* belonging thereto, And he did most especially commend the *Collects* of any part of *Divine Service*.

The *Resurrection* being commemorated but the Week before, the *Meditation* upon it was very natural to a devout Soul; and Mr. Mason being fully

possest with an Assurance of his Appearing would naturally expect it as a thing in course after his Resurrection.

This (as I suppose) runs in his mind for the whole Week, and when the next *Sunday* comes, (the first after *Easter*) he reads the Gospel, *John* 20. 19.

The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut, where the Disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you; and when he had so said, He shew'd unto them his hands, and his side. Then were the Disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you: And when he had said this, he breath'd on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

This being put to his long surmizings, gives him a fresh heat, and more vigorous expectations; And when the day, and he (I should have said the fasting day, for he would eat nothing on *Sundays* that he might make room for vapours, which he
verily

verily believ'd to be inspiration) were quite spent with earnest Prayers and tedious repetitions, he naturally became all ecstasy and trance.

Down he lyes (and before his usual hour as the Divine, &c. observes in a late Pamphlet) and doses on the Gospel he had lately read, which makes so powerful an impression on his Brain, that when he seems to awake betwixt twelve and one (as near as I can learn) He believes the Vision he had in his Fit to be a reality; yea, and thinks that he still saw it. This no one will wonder at, that has observ'd how frequent it is for Children, after some terrible dream, to cry bitterly, even after they are awake and their Eyes open. Tho' we bring them a Candle (as Mr. Mason had one by him) they still believe they see with their Eyes, what they saw in their Dream, and 'tis a long time before we can quiet them and a longer before we can undeceive them. He that shall read *Casaubon's* third Chapter may see enough to prove, that 'tis not at all material in point of Apparition, whether the species comes to the Eyes from without, or from within.

Thus I have, as I take it, given at one view a series of occasions to this *surprizing novelty*. I will now insist upon some particulars.

2 His long and earnest *expectation* of our saviour's Bodily presence did promote the *delusion*, whether
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we look upon't as a *mere Dream*, or a *waking fancy*; whether we suppose it a *strong imagination*, or a *real apparition* of one of those spirits, that can with ease transform themselves into Angels of Light.

One in his circumstances might easily be impos'd on any of these ways, without any reflection upon his sincerity.

We are all sensible how natural it is for us to dream of those things we *expect*, and according to the earnestness of the expectation it makes a proportionable impression upon us. When we expect with Fear, after we have *acted* a Sleep for some time, and begin but to sleep in *earnest*; the Enemy approaches, and instead of a repose we find our selves clogg'd with such a dreadful weight, and our heads fill'd with such dismal Scenes, that when we awake we are all Confusion, and continue so for a long time after, though we do all we can to recollect our selves.

But if we *expect* any thing with an earnest desire of it, we are not only more certain to have it presented to us in our Dreams, (*Quæ enim quisq; impense expetit, quæq; fixius animo menteq; concipit, ea in somnio meditatur, earumq; rerum species noctu obversantur*, says L. Lemnius,) but we are like to dose on, because we are in love with the *Phantom*, and would prolong the pleasure, and deceive our selves.

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This may have been the case of our sick-brain'd Visionist ; whilst his Fancy was working upon the common Theme, it might whirl him into a kind of a dosing Fit, 'twixt sleeping and waking, (in which posture 'tis likely he finish'd his rude draught,) not so far awake as to exercise his reason, nor so soundly asleep as to hinder his confidence. *He remember'd, he said, That he turn'd himself in his Bed but a little before, and he was certain, that he slept not after 'till he saw the Beloved.* And the sight was so entertaining, that he could not but love the distempers that occasion'd it.

That which another would have call'd a hot Head, palpitation of Heart, or by the *Gentile* name of Vapours, he presently *christens* an impression from above, a Spiritual Impulse, and a Divine Affiatus.

And then, as my Account was, (though the *Divine*, &c. says, that he slept first,) He call'd up the Family of Expectants, who were as ready to Believe, as he could be to tell them, and the more they believ'd, the more was he confirm'd.

I was lately giving this account of the Matter to a worthy Gentleman, that much valu'd him, who was of the same mind with me, and confirm'd the thought by an agreeable Story of his own Lady, that expected, and dreamt, and was equally confident,

fident, 'till she had receiv'd a demonstration to the contrary. It was, as she told me, a lucky mistake, for 'till that time (which was but the Week before) she was inclin'd to believe Mr. *Mason*, and his Wonders.

But those who are unwilling to believe he was half asleep, because they heard him Swear the contrary, may, if they please, no less rationally, believe, That he had, by much thinking about it, drawn the perfect figure in his own imagination, and that his earnest desire had as confidently set it afore him.

I have known even a fearful expectation do much, and work wonders of this nature. A Lady, in a Family where I was very conversant, after the death of her beloved Child, had such fears of Death, that the picture of it was always before her; and she was possess'd with the belief of it to that degree, that when she was invited abroad to divert the Fancy, she would protest almost every ten steps, she saw Death in every thing she look'd on. And would often (to convince the Company that she was not mistaken) call to the Coach-man to stop, and make the Servant bring the *Pebble* to the Coach, which she verily thought was a *Death's Head*.

But

But our Fears (as I have already said) are not so good at painting as our Hopes, where we meet with no Colluctation, and where every thing helps to uphold the Fancy and nothing to oppose it.

He that has a confident expectation of the beloved Good, (whether he has grounds for it or not) shall screw his Imagination into the possession of it, and see it, and enjoy it, by an anticipation. But if some shall still think (as I find they do) that it could be nothing less than an Apparition indeed and indeed, then I say further, That the earnest expectation will abundantly satisfy how it might be occasion'd by that *evil Spirit*, who well knows how to delude the Sense and mock the Fancy.

The *Devil*, tho' he was long since degraded, and expell'd those blisful Regions (and so lost his glory) for misbehaviour, remains still a cunning Sophister, as his name imports; and the many thousand years experience of such an *active Spirit*, cannot but have improv'd his Knowledge to an *immense degree*.

They (one or other of them at least) can never be thought ignorant of every Man's Constitution; and no doubt but they hold a mutual Correspondence to find out every Man's blind side.

Nor is it to be doubted but that they do most particularly confer Notes, consult all their Politicks, and unite all their Forces to attack the Person

that means well, that is good in the main, and most ardently breaths after the things of a *divine* life.

Those subtle Spirits need not be told, that even good Men are soonest decoy'd into a snare, by such as are of a Feather with themselves, that Error will sooner be entertain'd from a Pious, than Truth from a Prophane Person; and that the Messengers of Satan, dress'd in the true *Apostolick Livery*, may spread the infection of Error *incognito*, and under specious Disguises.

It is *their Nature, their Essence*, (if I may so speak) to show their spite and malice to him especially that is any thing *God-like*: And if they find him too wise and good to forsake his integrity, they shall drive the Nail that will go, and smite him with a Notion that will chase away Sobriety.

They that think to discern the Spirit, says Dr. Jackson, without more ado, by his way of breathing, may, instead of him, be troubled with an unwelcome Guest, always ready to invite himself where he sees preparation made for his better----The Devil has learn'd many ways of *Salutation and Address*, able to fill empty Breasts, or shallow Heads, unsettled in Truth, with such pleasant, mild and gentle blasts, as are apt to breed strong persuasions of more than angelical Inspirations. God grant, says he, in the
next

next words, the carriage of ensuing times may argue these Admonitions needless.

3. Another occasion of this Delusion might proceed from his *daily converse with men of ordinary parts, and with mean Souls, that were taken with Novelty, and immediately expected a new Heaven, and a new Earth.*

He seldom or never would Discourse with Men of Sense upon these things, but with poor ignorant Creatures of *great Faith*, (such as 'twas) but of little *Reason*.

Here I grant he design'd well, to bring the poor to the Kingdom of Heaven, and thought it more becoming to give than to receive. But this mean Converse with shallow Admirers, sok'd him farther in his *profound depths*, and the immediate impressiion that his Notions made upon *their easie and purely passive minds*, help'd to persuade him that it was from God.

That this was his way, I am very certain, and it has been a repeated Objection to me against his Integrity, *That he seldom associated himself with men of sense, and when he did, he would waive all Discourses of an elevated Nature, and talk like other men.*

The Objection I have already Answer'd; that which I at present urge, is, That a Man's parts will *rust* if they have not sometimes the *whet* of a generous Conversation, and in this condition, he will

either be over-run with Melancholy, whilest he Converses only with the grim Visages and grisly Shades of his disturb'd Phancy ; or else he will become vain and empty, tofs'd to and fro with every *flatus*.

4. I may add, that one thing more which help'd forward the Delusion was from his taking too much *Tobacco*. This he thought an innocent entertainment, and therefore he indulg'd it : But 'tis natural for frail Man to delight himself too much in that which nourishes his Disease. I seldom visited him but he was envelop'd in clouds of Smoke, and this, amongst other things, over-heat his Brain, and kindled that Zeal which wrought it self into new *Light and Prophecy*.

I the rather mention this, because his chiefest Friend did ascertain me of the Truth of it. For upon my enquiry, Whether he was at all times alike full of Rapture ? It was presently answer'd, That generally, while he smok'd, he was in a kind of *Ecstasy*, and all his People flock'd about him to receive his Communications. It made me think of blind *Homer*, and his gaping Poets.

And so much for my *Third Letter*.

The *Fourth* enquires how it may consist with the Divine Goodness to permit a Person of no ill meaning to fall into so great Delusion ?

This

This Query, I confess, was propos'd to me in some-what a different Dress; for instead of a Person of *no ill meaning*, they propounded it, *how a person sincerely good*, &c. But the Word *Sincerity*, when apply'd to an *Enthusiast*, is liable to an *arrest*. And therefore I shall first give my Reason why I decline it in the present case.

1. He that is perfectly Sincere, will not only avoid all known Evil, (as I hope Mr. *Mason* did) but will suspect his private Judgment, and do all he can to know the Truth; in which particular it is to be fear'd that *he* was much defective.

Dr. *More*, in his *Treatise of Enthusiasm*, though he is some-what tender of some *Enthusiastical* Persons, yet he cannot but grant that the extravagancies of most of them, are occasion'd through their own Fault, and the Guilt lies at their own doors. There is an irregularity or vitiosity of the Will, necessary to this Distemper, whereof Temperance, prudent Refreshment, Humility and Attention to sober Reason, would either be a Prevention, or a Cure. Now the neglect of these are in some degree or other culpable, and so far evil, and so far the person is not perfectly Sincere.

Though they are violently, yet they are not irresistably assaulted by their own Complexion. I confess indeed, That it seems hard at first sight,
that.

that Reason, after its utmost efforts, should be so liable to the vigour of the *Phantasms*, and should be so far captivated by 'em, as to list it self under the Enemy's Colours, and fight on the contrary side. Of which there are several instances in *Cassaubon*; and Dr. *More* speaks of *David George*, and others, that were grave and sedate in Speech, and engaging in Conversation, as much as Mr. *Mason* could be.

But to this I would offer two things.

1. That Melancholy does occasion sometimes a particular, tho' not a total Eclipse of the Light of Reason; and then, tho' all the other powers of the Mind act wonderfully well, yet here is an incurable flaw 'till Time, or Care, or Providence remove it. Now these Persons, as they are not to be flatly term'd *Insincere*, neither can they properly be call'd *Sincere*, being craz'd *quoad hoc*, and have the sad comfort of *Hercules furens solus te jam præstare potest furor insontem*.

2. The other thing that I would offer, is, That Men are strangely apt to dandle the Children of their own Brain, to cherish their amusing *Phantasms* and *Imaginations*, which they at first begot in the Mind, by unreasonable Fastings or Rigours, (thinking it unlikely that their should be a bad effect of so good a cause) by too intense Meditation,

tion, by over-curious and anxious enquiries into future Events, by fanciful conceits of new Discoveries, by morose Zeal, &c. Here, I say, it's true, That at first, Reason, and other good means, might have mastered the impressions, but being suffered to brood long upon the Mind, then (like a suffusion in the Eye) they tincture and stain it, and every thing in this case appears in the colour of their own disease.

Now, certainly, a Delusion which thus overtakes a Man, must be call'd voluntary, and so far culpable, though not in its self, yet in its Sources and Causes. 'Tis just as we blame a Man, who through outrageous Love, or excessive Drinking, falls into Frenzies, the wildness of which, while it lasts, he shall be fatally subject to, and yet surely his sottishness in contracting it, can't be call'd innocent.

I do not doubt but *John of Leyden* as verily believ'd himself that *the King of Sion was come*, when he ran naked, and bellow'd it about the Streets of *Munster*; as *John of Stratford*, that he had seen a glorious Appearance of our Blessed Lord and Saviour preparing to Judge the World, and to save *Sion*, and the Borders, that is *Water-Stratford*, and the Parts adjacent.

None can give better proof that they are in ear-
nest,

nest, (but for all that we must not call 'em *sincere*,) than to venture their Lives upon it, as those miserable Wretches did in *Germany*, with *Veni, Creator spiritus*, always in their mouths; and as *Hacket* and *Venner*, and his *Fifth-Monarchy-Men* here in *England*, appealing as Solemnly to God as these Witnesses of *Mr. Mason's* did, (in their Pamphlet call'd, *Two Witnesses to the Mid-Night-Cry*,) and praying as long as they had breath.

If a Man was Sincere, he would hear an Argument, but all the Arguments in the World are insignificant to such as think they can confront them by a *Vision* or *Revelation*.

Dr. More, in his *Mystery of Godliness*, tells us, That *Enthusiastick* Madness is never disjoyned from the highest kind of Pride, *even there where it seems to be most humble*. For the attributing nothing to it self, but that all its Knowledge and Power is immediately from God, is nothing else but an ostentation of an higher kind of Power, and more infallible way of Knowledge than other Mortals have; of which *Mahomet's* Vision is a lively Representation.

It is some-what pitiable indeed, when the Study of the Scriptures proves an occasion of such Delusions. But *Manna* us'd otherwise than by Divine Prescription, bred Worms, and stank. Nor is it

it strange, that Persons who have fits of our first Mother, (Curiosity, and Pride, and Itch after forbidden Knowledge,) should grow giddy, by looking down upon depths of Speculation, which the *Divine Spirit* has interdicted our search into. Such are in particular, our Lord's precise time of Coming to Judgment, the punctual Season of his Restoring the Kingdom to *Israel*, which the Father has put in his own power.

The Truth is, the Opinion of the *Chiliassts*, had need be exceedingly weeded and prun'd, or else it will bewitch the Imagination, and ravish the lower Man with gay and glittering forms of the Empire of the Saints, the *New Jerusalem*, Enthroning of Christ, &c. Or else it will, not only divert us from the Expectation of a more Heavenly Bliss, and invite us to sit down on this side *Jordan*; but it will, if pursu'd home, sap the Foundation of our Lord's Spiritual Kingdom, by interpreting the Prophecies of it to an earthly Sense. But to proceed;---Could that Man be perfectly Sincere, who (when he was by Office and Duty, a Guide and Instructor of the Ignorant) never minded that of *S. Paul*, advising Men *not to be soon shaken in mind, nor to be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter, dictated by a truly divine spirit, as that the day of Christ was at hand.*

H

Could

Could he be in all parts of Duty Sincere, and yet take no notice that searching of the Scriptures, judging of our selves what is right, proving all things that we may hold fast that which is good, are duties?

Alas! Sincerity obliges us to do all we can to know the best, as well as to act according to the best of our Knowledge.

A rational Believer is not only to believe willingly what God says, but is also to use diligence in searching whether God has said it.

Supine Credulity and neglect of this, is oftentimes a cause that Man is given over to a reprobate Mind, or undiscerning Understanding.

Sincerity must take in *moral Prudence*, (which is the perfection and vertue of the judging Powers within us) to make it compleat; and then the eye of the Mind will be kept clear and perspicacious; then will all corporeal Impressions be duly examin'd, and brought to a true Test, and just Light, whereby may be discover'd what is solidly true, and sincerely good.

This will enable us to form Persuasions about divine Matters, not only confident and vigorous, (for strength of Perception is not always a badge of Truth,) but also true, Substantial and Real, I mean such as will approve themselves to all Impartial Enquirers.

The

The more we are enclin'd to *curioſities* by our natural Temper, we ſhould the more nicely and *curiouſly* inſpect our *Phantaſms*, and examine our own *Conceits*.

The neglect of this I take to be the great cauſe of Mr. Maſon's miſcarriage, and therefore it grieves my very heart to think, that Men who pretend to Senſe, yea, and Religion too, ſhould (out of fondneſs to any Man's perſon) ſo ſtate the Queſtion, as if they were more ſuſpicious of God than Man.

Shall we call this Charity, to be unjuſt?

Shall we be unjuſt to God, who cannot Err, that we may be charitable to Man, who at beſt is prone to it? No, no, Let God be true, and every Man a liar.

If we are unwilling to Judge the Man evil, 'till we ſee his wickedneſs; Let us, at leaſt, never think ill of God, 'till we can be aſſur'd of Man's Sincerity; and becauſe that can never be certainly diſcover'd, we muſt never admit the leaſt thought that may poſſibly reflect on God.

I ſay not this for want of a farther Answer, for I could be full of Argument, let the Queſtion be ſtated how it will; but I can't forbear expreſſing my reſentment and indignation againſt all ſuch, as would rob, as would dethrone God, that they

may Deifie a Man, and that chiefly for being out of the way.

If they love Mr. *Mason*, because he was good, one would think they should love God too for his goodness; because their beloved Mr. *Mason* could have no goodness but what he receiv'd from Him. And if they love him for any other qualification, they do but carels an Imperfection, and hug a Delusion; they do but tread in the steps of the *Heathen*, who deify'd their Passions and Distempers; they imitate the *Turks*, who to this day, count mad and epileptick People Sacred. *Pessima res est errorum apothecosis, & pro peste intellectus habenda est, si a misceat veneratio.* Nov. org. Aph. 65.

Vain Creatures! That profess a veneration for the Man, because they thought him *God-like* and good, and at the same time would admit a supposal, That God is less than good, and unlike Himself. I could----- *Sed præstat motos componere----*

The Query is, *How it may consist with the Divine Goodness to permit a man of no ill design, to fall into so great Delusions?*

Here, it is likely, some would have made no difficulty to answer roundly, That 'tis no ways inconsistent with God's Attributes, to convey a false Persuasion in Religion into the mind of his Creature, provided there be no moral turpitude in it.

it. But I cannot see why falsehood in Religion, should claim Kindred with Heaven, by so near and immediate a descent. God is Light, and in Him is no Darknes at all; nor can the same Fountain send out sweet Waters and bitter. I hope we may resolve the case on better grounds than these. For when God in his Wisdom and Goodness had afforded us his word, and uncontestable Revelation for our Light, and Reason for the Eye to discern it; and had in the fundamental parts transmitted to us those Scriptures, interpreted to us by the holiest and best of Men, the early Guides of the truly *Catholick and Apostolick Church*; and had done all it could become a prudent Law-giver to do, to forewarn us of our danger in going astray, and to fence us in (while we are in pursuit of Truth) by such Precepts as these; *To be wise unto sobriety; not to intrude into those things which we have not seen; vainly puff up in our fleshy mind: To contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints, &c.* Having done this, I say, and much more to secure us; I see not how more could be expected at his gracious Hands.

If after this, Mens fanciful Heads will break through all restraints, and over Hedge and Ditch follow the *Will with wiff* of Imaginations, and wandering Lights, it is a double injury to charge God
of

of defective Conduct. His Providence is no more bound to preserve us from Error than from Sin, in a forcible way ; nor can it be any imputation upon his Goodness, that after the Provision he has made to make all Men wise and good, there should yet remain some wavering, or weak in Faith, others fluttering after shining Fancies in a Scripture dress.

Can we imagine Truth dearer to Him than Holiness? Or, that bad Diet will not produce Distempers? And curious and mysterious Studies in things too high for us, should not end in vapours and giddiness?

As for Holiness of Life (which the devout Sister stands upon,) 'tis the same thing that was pleaded for *Pelagius*, *Socinus*, and several others that I could name, who lead as virtuous Lives, and were as exemplary in their Conversations. But in plain Truth, Men of weak Judgments, and of devout Affections, impressive Fancies, and indiscreet Austerities, will ever be obnoxious, by the plain reason of the thing, to such Temptations; and therefore I must tell such Persons, who have already overcome the relishes of the Flesh, that their proper Scene of Trial and Virtue, lies in cleansing themselves from filthiness of Spirit ; such is Singularity,

larity, Newfagl'dness, Spiritual Pride, and doting on our Darling Opinions.

The *wholsome Words*, and the *sound Doctrine*, which the Apostle mentions in his Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, do, (if not primarily signifi'd) at least imply (*mens sana*) the Doctrine of Men sound in their Wits; and I am confirm'd in the thought, from the Words set in opposition to them.

Thus in the *sixth* of the *first* to *Timothy*, and the *fourth* Verse, in opposition to *wholsome Words*, we read of the Man that *dotes about Questions*, that is sick or craz'd, *ῥῥῥ*, *Delirat ut saepe solent agroti*, says *Grotius*. And *Diodat* explains it by a kind of Frenzy, and violent Passion. *Delirans instar fœminæ pica laborantis*, says a third, so troubled with the *Green Sicknes* of the Mind, that (*neglectis sanis eduliis, vel noxia, vel minus sana, deperit*;) he likes nothing but what is unsound, and will encrease the Dilemper. And Verse the *fifth*, 'tis oppos'd by *perverse Disputings of men of corrupt minds*; as we read it; but I think it should be render'd, the odd Disputings of Men, that have their Understandings perverted.

Yea, I am apt to think that 'tis call'd *sound Doctrine*, in a direct opposition to the Doctrine of Men that are craz'd *quoad hoc*, in opposition to the *Doctrine of the Kingdom*, as they call it.

Titus

Titus 1st and the 9th, Holding fast the *Faithful Word*, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by *sound Doctrine*, both to exhort and to convince. ----- *Not giving heed to Jewish Fables*. Of which we know the chief was, That the Messiah was to set up a worldly Kingdom. *Non intendentes Judaicis Fabulis de Messia Rege terreno, de resurrectione priore in his terris*, says *Grotius* upon the place.

But to draw to a Conclusion. Over-straining of Devotion, produces more crazy Visionists and Enthusiasts, than any one Cause whatsoever: And when, like *Turkish Dervises*, Men have grown giddy and entranc'd by Pensiveness, long Fasting and Rigour (unreasonable and unsupportable to Nature,) the next step is, that they shall entitle their several Fancies to some Sacred regard, and deliver Dreams for Oracles. And would you have God work Miracles for such Mens security, who has declared, *He delights not in the Sacrifice of Fools*.

No----- We may justly leave them to walk in the Fires that they have kindled, partly by collision of Hard and Apocalyptick Passages against one another, and partly by hardships upon their Natures of their own imposing; which raises the *Lee* of Melancholy in their Humours and Blood, and disturbs the Instruments of Reason, and the Animal Spirits, or chases them into too rapid or vertiginous
Motions;

Motions; as a mere Fire-stick whirl'd about, shall appear a Circle, or a Globe of Fire.

Let us not then be angry at the nature of things, nor suspect the Almighty Goodness, because his Wisdom did not permit him to exert his miraculous Power to undeceive his *Creature*, who did all he could to cherish his Distemper, and make much of the Delusion.

2. But *Secondly*; Whereas you say it is not to be conceiv'd, how God should suffer so holy and good a Man to be deceiv'd; I beseech you, for God's sake, to consider again, that we can at most but guess at Man's Goodness.

The inward Principle (which alone can give him his due Epithet) is unknown to us. In Charity we judge well where the Evil is not apparent; but we know a Man may be superstitious in avoiding Superstition, or be over-credulous for fear of falling into Unbelief; a Man may pride himself in his Humility, and his breathing after a more pure way, may be nothing more than an affectation of Singularity. And withal I must say, it gives one some cause to suspect this, where we see People affect a Set of new and peculiar Phrases; as, *hanging upon the Skirts of Christ, getting of Oil*, with twenty more such like canting expressions, that I could name.

We may well make a demur to the plea of Holiness, because it is often misjudged by its being measured by the Standards of a Party. Hair Shirts and Discipline, are in some places marks of Grace; and elsewhere, a Man commences Saint, by morose Zeal, from sour Faces, and extempore Effusions.

4. Though he might mean well, yet his sins of Ignorance might deserve Correction.

Sins of Ignorance, we know, are punishable in the *whole Congregation*, and they become thereby guilty; as is plain from *Lev. 4. 13.* and therefore is a Sacrifice order'd upon their account, *v. 14.* But Ignorance is almost insufferable in the *Priest*, whose business it is to know the Will of God, and to instruct others.

If he instructs *his Hearers* amiss, it may (it is likely) extenuate *their* Guilt in some measure; but I can't but think, that *He himself* must pay for it. And therefore it is observable in the forenam'd Chapter, (where he speaks of sins of Ignorance, and of them only,) *Moses* begins first with the Priest, *verse 3.* *If the Priest that is appointed do sin according to the sin of the People, &c.* It should have been render'd, *If the Priest sin to the sin or guilt of the People, (i. e. To make them sinful or guilty: To cause the People to sin, as it is well*
render'd

render'd by the *Seventy*,) by giving them *Matter* to offend, either by *Doctrine* or *Example*, as *Tremellius* explains it. This, though it be done out of ignorance, requires an Offering greater, than is order'd for the common People, *verse* 28. yea, greater than for a Ruler, *verse* 22. And therefore I conclude the Sin in a Priest (though it be of ignorance) is much greater than the like sin in any other. *He that causes many others to sin, 'tis fit he should be deluded, that many others may learn Righteousness.*

If it be enquir'd, Wherein did he cause others to sin? I may tell you in a few instances out of many, *viz.*

By neglecting the Rites and Offices of the *Church*, he caus'd others to neglect them.

He caus'd many of the neighbouring Parishes to forsake their Pastors.

He occasion'd many worthy Ministers of Christ to be censur'd, because they would not violate their Consciences, and do as he did.

He occasion'd a Separation, and encourag'd *Schism*.

How great a Sin this is, I shall not now determine, but be it as great as it will, 'tis I am sure far greater in a *Minister of Christ* (though I say nothing of his Subscriptions and Oaths) than it

can be in another, because *his* main business is to preach up *Union*, and to oppose those who would *cause Divisions*. I say farther, be it as great as it will in the People, and greater in the Pastor, it will still be an aggravation of it *at this time*, when so many new Sects are brooding.-----

Again, His dismal apprehensions of an Eternal Decree, which had damn'd the major part of Mankind, mov'd the fiery Spirits of many of his Hearers, to aspire to the same whole-sale Condemnation.

In a word, He made a great number to neglect their Families, their Business and Calling, and to lead a santering life all the Week long.

4. Lastly, Though we should still grant that he meant well, yet God might have several good Ends in suffering this Delusion. Namely:

1. That other Men may be the more thankful, that God hath kept 'em within the compass of his revealed Will, and all just Moderation, as Bishop Hall speaks it, *Solil.* 29. and that they whom he hath blest with Wisdom, and a discerning Spirit, might the better content themselves with their share, (*Casaub. p. 47.*) and be the more heartily thankful for that which he there calls the highest gift of God (Grace excepted, which is the Reformation of it) namely, *sound Reason*.

2. There

2. There may be another end of this Divine Permission of an Error, *viz.* Because some certain earthy and heavy Complexions are hereby inveigled into the ways of Holiness, and stirr'd up by that vehemency and zeal us'd by such Persons, to bethink themselves of the powers of the World to come; when calmer Exhortations, though joyn'd with closer Reasonings, would have been altogether unsuccessful. And though this indeed be a way of Preaching Christ, that is (in the main) unwarrantable, and unsafe, yet we know St. Paul, when the Principle was Envy and Strife that actuated the Preacher, rejoyc'd nevertheless that *Christ* was Preach'd, either in pretence or truth.

3. 'Tis worthy of God to suffer it, because hereby an occasion is admittred to the Guides of the Church, to exercise their vigilance, and their gifts of discerning of Spirits, in a sober and rational examination of every confident Pretender. The pious and prudent exerting of such their Authority and Care, being a thing of manifest tendency to the safety of the Flock, and to the magnifying of the Ministry of the Gospel, in all the Genuine and Apostolical methods of its promotion.

4. God's Timing of the permission of this Delusion, makes it a more signal act of his good Providence. When *Liberty in Religion* had made Men

Licen-

Licentious, *when* a most gracious Indulgence has been abus'd to Extravagancies; *then, then* does it please God to suffer this Delusion, that all Men may be certifi'd of the danger of *Enthusiastick Principles*, both to Church and State. *Nemo satis credit tantum delinquere, quantum permittas, adeo indulgent sibi latius ipsi*, says the Satyrists, *Juv. Sat. 14.*

5. To conclude all, I shall in the last place give a Parallel case which we meet with in the 13 Chap. of the *First Book of Kings*, of the *Man of God* out of *Judah*, by the *Word of the Lord*, unto *Bethel*.

Whilest *Jeroboam* stood by the Altar to offer Incense, he cry'd against the Altar in the *Word of the Lord*, and said, *O Altar, Altar! Thus saith the Lord, &c.* His Message anger'd *Jeroboam*, and he put forth his hand against him, and it dried up. Hereupon *Jeroboam* delir'd the *Man of God* to pray for him, that his hand might be restor'd. He did, and it succeeded. And the Altar was rent, as he foretold. The King then invites him home, by promises of a Reward, as well as Refreshment. But the *Man of God* said unto the King, *If thou wilt give me half thy house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat Bread, or drink Water in this place, for so it was charg'd me by the Word of the Lord, Eat no Bread, nor drink Water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest; so he went another way, &c.*
After

After this there was an *old and Lying Prophet in Bethel*, that follows him, and finds him *sitting under an Oak*, (faint, perhaps, and weary,) and smoothly invites him to his House to eat Bread. But he immediately answers, *I may not, neither will I, for I was forbid by the Word of the Lord*. When the cunning old Prophet found he was sufficient Proof against his Invitation, he then pretends a Revelation (which he thought a proper Bait for a Man that way given.) *I am a Prophet also* (says he) *as thou art, and an Angel spake unto me by the Word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee, into thine House, that he may eat Bread, and drink Water, (but he lied unto him.) So he went back with him, and did eat Bread, and drink Water*. Which he had no sooner done, but the same false Prophet that deluded him, pronounc'd his Sentence, and as he returns, *a Lion met him by the way, and slew him, and his carcass was cast in the way, and the As's stood by it; the Lion also stood by the carcass*.

Here now I would fairly ask, Whether this *Man of God* did not deservedly suffer without any possible reflection upon God's goodness?

For he had as much assurance as it was possible for Man to receive, of the Mind of God.

The sign of the Prophecy came to pass, the withered Hand was restored at his Prayer, and we find

find him so undoubtedly satisfy'd of it, that he denied the *King's* Meat or Treasures.

And should he not (do you think) have deny'd the *old Prophet* too, notwithstanding all his warm Words, and Angelical Pretences?

He should not (you must needs say) have left a certainty for an uncertainty: He was certain that the first Order was the Mind of God, and therefore he ought to have observ'd it, 'till he had receiv'd from God himself (with the same, or equal evidence) as positive Orders to the contrary. *Thus saith the Lord*, v. 21. *Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed THE MOUTH OF THE LORD*, and hast not kept the Commandment which the Lord thy God hath commanded thee, &c. *Præcepit tibi*, *ἐπαλάττω* says *Grotius*, (and adds, *Virorum laudatorum facta non laudanda quoties adferuntur in sacris literis, solet aliquid addi, unde intelligamus id non probari,*) commanded thee with an Emphasis. When the Scripture mentions the ill actions of good Men, it commonly adds somewhat to show the dislike of it. Now I dare say, there is nothing can be objected against this *nameless Man of God*, that may not be as fairly urg'd against our Neighbour, who had the *Name of a Prophet*, and nothing else.

Our Neighbour had long since known the true Mind of God reveal'd in his Word, and was well acquainted

acquainted with the evidences that confirm'd it to be his. He had seen the good effects that it had wrought on others, and had experienc'd the renovation it had wrought on his mind. It had taught him to deny all manner of Invitations to sensual Gratifications, it had made him above the Pleasures or the Profits of the World ; it had taught him to be empty of himself, that he might be fill'd with God.

But when he had made so great a progress in the right way, whilst he is penfive and thoughtful, and *languishing almost for a more blissful estate*, the Deceiver overtakes him, solicits him ('tis probable) to return, and promises that very *refreshment upon Earth*, for which he *languish'd*. At first he could answer the *Suggestion* boldly, *The Word of the Lord has forbid me to expect my refreshment here*. But when it pretends to be the *Voice of God*, for God's sake, then he disobeys *his word*, and entitles the *Delusion* to a *Divine Impulse*.

Thus is he entertain'd for four or five Years, and then God thought it fit, that the same false Spirit that first impos'd upon him, should perfect the Delusion, with which he dy'd. *Bene ore mali Prophetæ sententiam mortis accepit, cujus seductione a præceptis vitæ declinavit, ut inde pænam veraciter su-*

meret, unde culpam negligenter admisit, says Greg. on the Death of the *Man of God*.

Nor can any thing that I know of be said for Mr. *Mason*, that may not more fairly be pleaded for the *Man of God*.

If you plead that *his* Error was not wilful, the same may be said for the *Man of God*; and Ignorance or Negligence under the *Law*, was not so culpable as it is under the *Gospel*.

If you say that Mr. *Mason* had many grounds for his compliance; 'tis answer'd, the *Man of God* had as many, and more reasonable.

Mr. *Mason's* Friends I have heard plead, That there has been formerly supernatural Impulses; and therefore he being a truly good Man, had reason to expect and believe them. But may not the same be better urg'd for the other's relying upon the old Prophet, when communications of that Nature were more frequent; and he might modestly think, Why should not this old Prophet have a Revelation as well as my self?

But Mr. *Mason*, they say, had something in Scripture to countenance the Suggestion. Suppose it was so, yet his Anonymous Predecessour had much more; for did not God countermand to *Abraham* the Sacrificing of his Son? And was not *Balaam*,

Balaam, that had been forbidden, bid afterwards to go with the Meſſengers, *Numb. 22.*

Theſe, and ſuch like Inſtances, might more rationally perſuade, than two or three obſcure Texts, full of Myſtical Alluſions.

But notwithstanding all this that might be ſaid for the Man of God, *a Lion met him by the way and ſlew him.*

I urge not this, becauſe I would have it thought that Mr. Maſon's *well-meaning* may not in *ſome meaſure* leſſen his guilt, and his Vapours more. But I would have thoſe conſiderations be of what force they can to extenuate the Crime; becauſe I find the Lion did not devour the *Carcaſs*, when it had deſtroy'd the *Man*. And I would be glad to have it thought, that the poor deluded People were leſs culpable, than their Teacher; becauſe the Aſs that ſtood by (and went only as he was driven,) though he was in danger, had no hurt.

However, it ſhould be a warning to every one (that is not quite rid of his Senſes) never to cleave to any Man's Opinion out of admiration to his Perſon, but to make God only Sovereign Lord of his Faith. It ſhould teach us, that *right Reaſon* is the illumination of the Mind; and when it is in a calm Spirit, is the beſt Inſpiration we have grounds
to

to expect. That the Method for our Salvation being long since establish'd, we have no reason to look for any farther Revelation. In a word, it should teach us to be careful in matter of Religion, to keep within the due bounds of God's Revealed Will, and so to endeavour the advancement of the common Good, as that a pious Zeal may not draw in Confusion, nor by a mistake rear up the Walls of *Babel*, whilst we intend *Jerusalem*; as the Devout Bishop *Hall* most piously advises.

FINIS.